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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BAKU 001408

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SUBJECT: REVIEW OF AZERBAIJAN'S FIRST NATO INDIVIDUAL
PARTNERSHIP ACTION PLAN; VIEWS ON SECOND

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DERSE FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (C).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: As Azerbaijan prepares to embark on a second NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP-2), it is clear that Azerbaijan's first IPAP (IPAP-1) has played an important role in encouraging reform within the extremely conservative Ministry of Defense (MoD) and more broadly within the GOAJ by encouraging a new, strategic interagency process. According to Bob Simmons, representative of NATO to the south Caucasus, IPAP-2 will focus on defense reform and peacekeeping force readiness. There are also some areas in which Azerbaijan has stepped back from the more ambitious parts of IPAP-1, specifically in regard to the Nasosnaya airbase and implementation of a civilian deputy minister of defense in 2008, both omitted in IPAP-2. IPAP-2 is expected to be presented to the North Atlantic Council in late 2007. Azerbaijan's programs to achieve NATO reforms continue to be hampered by MoD-Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) rivalry, MoD's continued resistance to civilian control of the military, the new and still cumbersome interagency process, and Azerbaijan's continuing perception of itself as a nation at war over with Armenia. END SUMMARY.

IPAP-1 AREA OF PROGRESS

¶2. (C) The NATO international staff's report on IPAP-1 was generally positive and noted a number of areas in which Azerbaijan has met its pre-stated goals. These areas include the participation of Azerbaijan in NATO missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and the completion of the National Security Concept (NSC) in 2007. The NSC is the first public government document which outlines Euro-Atlantic integration as a strategic choice by noting that the NSC is a "set of goals, principles and approaches to the policies and measures, which underline the independence, territorial integrity and democratic development of the country, integration into the Euro-Atlantic area as the strategic choice, and multidimensional and balanced foreign policy..." The document reflects that Azerbaijan will continue its long-standing pragmatic approach to regional relations nothing that it will continue pursue a "multidimensional and balanced" foreign policy. The full text of the NSC is publicly available at http://www.mfa.gov.az/ssi_eng/foreign_policy/inter_affairs/nsc/NSC/pdf.

¶3. Additionally, Azerbaijan has plans in place for the introduction of civilian personnel into the MoD, up to the level of Deputy Defense Minister. Most ambitiously, the MoD

has begun an effort to convert the entire structure of its armed forces, including the MoD and the General Staff, to the NATO model by the end of 2009. If brought to fruition, the result would go far beyond the reforms envisioned in IPAP-1. According to the Norwegian Ambassador, the Azerbaijani MoD had recently asked for technical assistance and advice from Norway in the area of civilian control of the military, an encouraging sign from the MoD, which has long resisted efforts to introduce civilian control.

¶4. (C) The establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Center in Baku's central library is another important step, as it is an important vehicle to promote greater public awareness of NATO and Euro-Atlantic structures. However, the Center remains underfunded, and with better funding and direction could play a greater role in the education of the population about NATO.

Progress has been made in the area of Science and Technology sector with the "Melange" project which safely disposes of used rocket fuel leftover from the Soviet period. While all these positive indicators are the result of Azerbaijan's cooperation with NATO and the USG, it is important to note that steps to date were not the result of an overall integrated strategy with the explicit aim of NATO membership.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NSC

¶5. (C) The passage of the National Security Concept, the drafting of which was initiated in September 2004 and was signed by President Aliyev in May 2007, represents an important strengthening of Azerbaijan's fledgling interagency national security policy process led by Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov. The MFA hopes to apply this same interagency process in the development of the National

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Military Doctrine (NMD), which is supposed to lead to the Strategic Defense Review and the Foreign Policy Strategy document, both of which were mandated in the President's May 2007 decree. The President also decreed that the GOAJ prepare similar concepts in the economic, cultural, science, education, health and transportation spheres. In a recent meeting with deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov, Azimov said that President Aliyev endorsed the MFA continuing to be the lead ministry to coordinate the preparation of these documents. What tangible results will emerge from these documents is unclear, yet this shift toward a more strategic interagency planning process can be attributed in part to the NATO/IPAP-inspired reform process.

FLEDGLING INTERAGENCY PROCESS

¶6. (C) The interagency coordination process in Azerbaijan is nascent and functions as such. The fact that there is a structure for such a process at all is a great success for Azimov, who is its principle driver. The MFA is clearly the most "pro-NATO" ministry in the Azerbaijani government and has the most comprehensive understanding of the political side of the process, however, major areas of security sector reform lie in the "operational" power ministries themselves, such as the MoD, State Border Service, Ministry of Emergency Situations and Ministry of National Security, all of which have numerous incentives to resist reform and transparency.

¶7. (C) The fact that the MFA was able to establish enough authority over the power ministries to produce an agreed upon NSC document and a continuing MFA led national security policy process is a major achievement. The interagency process is also slowed by the involvement of ministries not involved in core "hard" security issues, including the ministries of Health, Education, Agriculture, and Environment, to approve any interagency decisions, such as the IPAP. Additionally, the process is also strained by the notoriously difficult relationship between the MoD and MFA, which results in bureaucratic turf battles. The general

views of the MoD by working level MFA officers is that the MoD is bureaucratic, slow to change, secretive, corrupt and overly sensitive of the MFA's role in the IPAP process. The MoD sees itself, correctly, as the most important ministry in regard to NATO IPAP, but in general, continues to be hampered by leadership which does not completely understand the difference between modernization and transformation.

GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING

18. (C) The MoD has the primary responsibility for overseeing the IPAP implementation process and takes this role seriously, motivated in part by the desire to show progress to NATO Headquarters. One of the biggest political reforms which needs to take place regarding the MoD is civilian control of the military. However, there appears to be a general lack of understanding amongst the Azerbaijani MoD of what true civilian control of the military means. In general, the MoD seems to believe that the simple installation of a civilian at the Deputy Minister level, along with the creation of other civilian structures within the MoD would suffice. Replacement of the Minister of Defense with a civilian is rarely discussed, and when it is discussed it is often noted that Azerbaijan should be considered an exception to this rule, because it is in a state of war with Armenia. Ideally, there needs to be a better understanding in the MoD that civilian control of the military also means a transparent budgeting and procurement process, parliamentary oversight, and a civilian minister. There seems to be no indication that Azerbaijan is seriously considering these reforms at this point.

19. (C) Additionally, there seems to be a general miscommunication between the MoD and NATO about the difference between NATO "standards" and NATO "structures." Oftentimes, MoD officers, and the minister himself will comment that the MoD has brought "all its units" to "NATO standards." However, this notion is misleading in that the units has been switched to NATO "structures," meaning that the names of various units have changed from Soviet to NATO standards. In general these changes are nothing more than cosmetic, and have little do to with units being up to NATO "standards". That said, the Embassy has noted that the

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simple integration to NATO structures has had a positive psychological effect on the mindset of mid- and junior-level officers, as they move away from the Soviet model.

10. (C) In discussions with Baku-based NATO allies, including Turkish, Lithuanian, Greek, Polish, Romanian, Latvian and Norwegian ambassadors and working-level officials, there is a general pessimism that Azerbaijan has the political will to overcome the deep culture of corruption. It is also unlikely to make significant, NATO-inspired reforms too rapidly or visibly, as this would upset a resurgent and assertive Russia, and a nuclear weapon-seeking Iran. Officials from the Turkish embassy specifically noted that Turkey would like to see Azerbaijan "move faster" on both the civilian and military areas of the IPAP. They pointed out that, in Turkey's view, Azerbaijan does not fully understand how it can use an IPAP to implement reform and said that Turkey believed that there would not be any major change with regard to Azerbaijan's relations with NATO in the coming two to three years. However, Turkey did not plan to "push" Azerbaijan to speed up its reform efforts, since it assessed that to do so would be unlikely to have a positive effect.

SECURITY

11. (C) Secrecy still plays an important role in post-Soviet society and Azerbaijan is no exception. The perceived need for secrecy is present at almost every level of the IPAP

development and implementation process and in the writing of the NSC. IPAP-1 was never made into a public document, and we do not expect that IPAP-2 will be any different. We have had regular dialogue with UK Representative to the International Advisors Working Group (IAWG), Sir Garry Johnson, whose job it is to advise Azerbaijan with the writing of the NSC along with Turkish, German and (absent) U.S. representative. Johnson often spoke of the lack of access he was granted to substantive areas of both the NSC and military doctrine, although over time his access increased. In general, the quasi-secrecy surrounding Azerbaijan's relations with and intentions toward NATO have fueled conspiratorial speculation in a society which is already pre-disposed to such views. However, in a positive change, the entire NSC was published upon approval in May 2007.

PROSPECTS FOR IPAP-2

12. (C) MFA officer Metin Kerimli, who has direct responsibility for finalizing IPAP-2 in the MFA and is helping Azimov manage the IPAP interagency process, told us that the MFA hoped that the IPAP-2 would be approved by the President and sent to NATO headquarters by November 2007, and hoped that it could be approved by NATO in early 2008. He said that the new IPAP will have few changes, in terms of issues, but will have a heavier focus on civil emergency planning, e-government, agency interoperability and administrative issues. He said that there would be no mention about Azerbaijan's intentions regarding formal NATO membership. Additionally, he said that IPAP-2 interagency coordination process would include at least six additional ministries/agencies, including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Military Industry, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Education, and the Azerbaijan National Association for Mine Action (ANAMA). While inclusion of these ministries slows the process, it does support the NATO values of openness and transparency to more GOAJ entities, and makes more of them players in an important internal reform process.

13. (C) During an October 2007 briefing, NATO Representative to the South Caucasus Bob Simmons gave a preview of what would likely be included in IPAP-2. Most importantly, the IPAP-1 goal of upgrading the Nasosnaya air base to NATO standards will not be part of the IPAP-2. This is not surprising, given that the GOAJ had dragged its feet regarding questions about Nasosnaya during the IPAP-1 period.

It is possible that the GOAJ decision to drop Nasosnaya from an IPAP-2 reflects continuing GOAJ unease about giving NATO a greater footprint in Azerbaijan, given the growing international tensions regarding Iran, and the repeated public assurances from President Aliyev that Azerbaijani

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territory would not be used for an attack against Iran. Second, IPAP-1's goal of having a civilian Minister of Defense by 2008 has been replaced by the clearly more modest goal of a commitment to draft a law to permit such a position to be created by 2008. Third, IPAP-2 is supposed to show a readiness to sign up to political commitments, including steps toward parliamentary oversight of the armed forces.

14. (SBU) Simmons described the second IPAP overall as containing some serious defense reforms and ambitious, good targets on peacekeeping force readiness. He said that in his meeting with Deputy FM Araz Azimov, it was clear that Azerbaijan wanted somehow to distinguish itself from other IPAP countries, but unlike Georgia and Ukraine, was (then) unwilling to consider an intensified dialogue about membership. (Comment: Azimov subsequently dropped hints of the GOAJ's interest in participating in "Intensified Dialogue" in 2-3 years, when IPAP-2 is completed.) The timeline for reviewing the second IPAP is ambitious. It has already been given to technical experts within NATO

departments for comment. All 26 countries will have a "couple of days" to comment within the NATO political committee framework. Simmons said he anticipates the IPAP will be presented to the North Atlantic Council by late 2007, under silence procedure. NATO is looking at doing a formal assessment of the IPAP by the spring. He emphasized that NATO will encourage Azerbaijan to make this a public document to enable discussion with civil society and public dialogue.

¶15. (C) COMMENT: Divining Azerbaijan's intentions toward NATO can often be difficult to understand because of Azerbaijan's broader foreign policy of "balancing" Euro-Atlantic integration, with its desire to maintain cordial, pragmatic relations with Russia and Iran. The exclusion of Nasosnaya and backtracking on establishing a civilian defense minister while proceeding with civilian control of the military at a lower level send a clear message that IPAP-2 will be more measured in its goals. While Azerbaijan has been successful in meeting some of the goals of IPAP-1, it seems that the GOAJ is not yet ready to use NATO and the IPAP process as a comprehensive means to implement the most difficult defense sector reforms. However, we continue to see the IPAP process as one of the most important and practical tools by which we can engage both high-level and working-level GOAJ officials in the area of defense sector reform.

¶16. (C) Azerbaijan's engagement with NATO-and particularly the IPAP process-has played a positive role in encouraging reform in a closed, undemocratic, kleptocratic society which is struggling with many transformational issues 16 years after independence, the first unhappy years of which were characterized by a succession of unsuccessful governments, war and near state collapse. It will be important for Azerbaijan to begin implementing many of the plans for transformation of the security sector (such as civilian control of the military), which heretofore exist only on paper. Finally, we need to continue to stress to Azerbaijan that the IPAP needs to be an integrated, comprehensive plan. While there are a number of areas in which Azerbaijan has made positive progress, such progress is still too often the result of non-integrated efforts, often from bilateral programs with the United States or Turkey. Septel will provide an update on current GOAJ views on NATO membership.
END COMMENT.
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